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Editor's note: The following commentary is an excerpt from the book **The Year of Grace of the Lord,** by A Monk of the Eastern Church, pp. 198-201, 209-210. This scriptural and liturgical commentary on the calendar of the Orthodox Church is available from: ROEA, PO BOX 185, GRASS LAKE MI 49240-0185 for \$10.95 + \$3.00 shipping.

THE ASCENSION

The Wednesday which follows the fifth Sunday after Easter is the day when, in liturgical terminology, we 'take leave' of the Easter feast. We commemorate the last day of the physical presence of the risen Christ amongst his disciples; and to honour this presence, to honour the Resurrection once more, the Church on this Wednesday repeats the service for Easter Sunday in its entirety. And now we have come to the fortieth day after Easter, the Thursday on which the Church celebrates the feast of the Ascension. [This feast has been celebrated throughout the whole Church since the beginning of the fifth century. In those days, Christians from Jerusalem went to celebrate the Ascension at Bethlehem, in the church built above the traditional site of the cave. This custom expressed the desire to bring together the last and the first day of Jesus's earthly life.]

Three lessons from the Old Testament are read at vespers for the Ascension, on the Wednesday evening. The first lesson (Isa. 2.2-3) speaks of a mountain: "In the days to come, the mountain of the Temple of the Lord shall tower above the mountains....All the nations will stream to it....Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord." This alludes to the Mount of Olives, from which Jesus ascended to his Father. The second lesson (Isa. 62.10 - 63.3,7-9) was chosen because of the following words: "Pass through, pass through the gates. Make a way for the people....In his love and pity he redeemed them himself, he lifted them up, carried them...." Jesus, ascending to heaven, opens the gates to his people, he prepares a way for them, he carries them and raises them up with him.

The third lesson (Zech. 14.1,4,8-11) also speaks of the mountain which was the scene of Jesus's final triumph: "See, a day is coming for the Lord....On that day, his feet will rest on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem from the east....When that day comes, running waters will issue from Jerusalem...."

The chants at matins for the Ascension are already filled with allusions to the Spirit, the Comforter, whom Jesus will send. Ascension is the prelude to Pentecost.

At the liturgy, the beginning of the Book of Acts (1.1-12) is read. Jesus, after a last meeting with His apostles, is taken up, and disappears in a cloud. [The presence of the cloud shows clearly the symbolic character of what might be called the physical aspect of the Ascension. The cloud which enveloped the tabernacle and guided Israel in the desert constituted the visible sign of the divine presence. Jesus's disappearance in a cloud is not rough imagery: it signifies that the end of our Lord's earthly life is the absorption of his glorified Body into the bosom of God.] The gospe for the liturgy (Luke 24.26-53) takes up the account of events from the first appearance of the risen Jesus to the assembled disciples [Let us notice the simplicity of our Lord's return to his disciples. Jesus does not begin by addressing them either with reproaches on with sublime teachings. He wishes them peace, and then straightaway asks whether they have anything for him to eat. The disciples offer him broiled fish and honey, which he eats in front of them. It is only afterwards that he teaches. In the same way, when somehow we have become separated from the Saviour, we should not worry about the way in which the link car be re-established, but simply call Jesus to us; we can offer him our fish and honey -that is, we can take him straight away to the centre of our life and of our daily preoccupations. We can pick up life's threads again at the point where they were broken off. He will say and do the rest.] and continues with it right up to the Ascension itself.

It is rare, if one has lived through the joy of Easte time sincerely, that one does not experience a certain constriction of the heart when the day of the Ascen

SOME EVENTS TAKING PLACE WITHIN THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX COMMUNITY IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA and THEIR IMPACT ON THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA and OUR THOUGHTS ON THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

PREAMBLE

The reason for which we have composed this docunent is our intention to put at rest some apprehenions related to us by our clergy and laity who were roused by the promulgation of certain unofficial leters. These papers were written and dispersed to express the desire of some that a dialog between our Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (Vatra) and the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada (Riopelle) be initiated to promote an administrative Church unity between the two jurisdictions.

The apprehension is that such a unification might entail surrendering our autonomy, thereby placing the Episcopate under the authority of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Church. The Episcopate is not presently in dialog either with the Romanian Patriarchate nor with the Archdiocese. Because there is nothing under discussion, there are no conditions to consider and no action to be taken. Nevertheless, we think it useful to offer our observations about the letters and the subject itself.

ORTHODOX DISUNITY AND UNITY IN **NORTH AMERICA**

We feel it necessary to preface our observations with some reflections about the present administrative disunity and also the general sacramental unity of North American Orthodoxy of which the Romanian community is a part.

The Church in North America rejoices in a sacramental unity which is evident in the concelebration of the Divine Mysteries by her hierarchs. Although there does exist a kind of gathering of hierarchs (the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in America/ SCOBA) which in a broad way reflects the sacramental oneness of the Church; nevertheless, this is an informal and unofficial conference. At this time, there is no single Synod of which all hierarchs are members. A single Synod is the norm for an autocephalous (self-ruling) Church.

Due to past historical realities, such a unified Synod speaking with one voice and one heart in the name of the Church, did not come into being. Nevertheless, it did throw roots in the past and we anticipate its flowering in our day. In 1970, the Russian Church recognized the autocephaly of the Russian Metropolia in North America, and its Metropolitan Synod became the "Holy Synod" of the Orthodox Church in America.

In that same year, our Episcopate joined the Orthodox Church in America, and Bishop Valerian became a member of that Holy Synod, that same body which later elevated him to the rank of archbishop. Today, we, too, are a member of the same Holy Synod which also includes the hierarchs of the Albanian and Bulgarian faithful.

There are large numbers of ethnic Orthodox whose hierarchs are part of the Synods of their Mother Churches abroad and thus do not take part in the work of the Synod of the Orthodox Church in America.

This current administrative disunity, which is an anomaly from the Canons of the Church, must change. One day every hierarch in North America will be part of a single Holy Synod of the Church in North America. The Mother Churches themselves and their "jurisdictions" in North America, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit are working toward this goal of administrative unity which would be expressed in the existence of a unique North American Synod of Hierarchs.

It is this acute awareness of the "unfinished unity" of the Church which troubles hierarchs, clergy and faithful of all jurisdictions in North America; and, through their unified efforts, they strive to work for universal recognition of an autocephalous Church of North America.

The SCOBA can be seen as one such effort on the hierarchal level. In many cities there are "Clergy Associations" which represent similar efforts on local levels. There are also "Lay Societies" whose members are from various jurisdictions and who work together to bear a united witness to the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith.

THE "JOINT DIALOG COMMISSION"

It was in this spirit that, in the recent past, the representatives of our Episcopate and those of the Archdiocese, the "Joint Dialog Commission," worked together and came to the conclusion which they offered to the hierarchs, i.e., that there is no reason why our clergy and faithful should not be able to pray together and to serve as brothers before the Holy Altar. The Congresses of both dioceses agreed with the Commission. Along with Archbishop Victorin, we also embraced this proposal and thus, between the two dioceses sacramental unity was restored.

Some members of that Commission wanted to begin to consider ways for administrative unification

SOME EVENTS Cont. from page 3

between the two dioceses. The Archdiocesan Congress had empowered its members to move forward in this direction. Our Congress, however, had not yet discussed the issue. We felt that more time was needed to feel the pulse of the faithful clergy and laity of the Episcopate before establishing such a dialog for unity.

As a point of information, we remind you that the Antiochian, Serbian and Ukrainian jurisdictions in North America each suffered the pains of internal disunity; but in time, with understanding and good will, each group discussed the issues which separated them, and by the grace of God, settled them and united administratively in one ethnic jurisdiction.

THE ISSUE AT HAND

Some clergy members of our Episcopate, knowing these historical developments within other jurisdictions, pondered the reality of disunity within their own ethnic community and decided to confer among themselves, hoping to gain a consensus as to how to address the problem of administrative disunity in the Romanian community.

Part of their desire for seeking reunion was based on their reflections on the historical desire of the clergy and faithful from the first years in North America to create and maintain a unity in the Romanian Community. They saw their activities as the continuation of that early desire.

A. "Letter of Request" — January 18

On January 24, 1996, the Episcopate Office received a facsimile from those who purposed to be speaking for "clergy and laymen" who were raising the question of the possibility to "Form the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia In The United States and Canada."

The purpose of the letter was to inform the Bishop's Office of the intent to submit to the Episcopate Council a petition: "our request (is) directed to the Episcopate Council guided by God and Your Grace to form a commission of dialogue between our Episcopate and the Missionary Episcopate and start working on the other details for fulfilling this historical event in the life of the Romanian Orthodox people here and for the future of the Orthodox Church in USA."

The "Historical Event" mentioned is the formation of a "Romanian Orthodox Metropolia (for) the United States and Canada...until the American Patriarchate is formed."

Our office sought to understand why this proposal to form a Romanian Metropolia was initiated now and why was it expressed in a spirit of "urgency."

One reason may have been that a previous motion made in the Episcopate Council was to propose to the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America to elevate our Episcopate to the rank of archdiocese and her hierarch to the rank of archbishop. At that Novem-

ber 11, 1995, meeting a committee was established to study the proposal. Their report included the reasons that the size and numbers of the Episcopate warranted this recognition.

It may have been considered that this "proposal" by the Council to the Holy Synod of the OCA fell short of the vision of administrative unity of the Romanian

jurisdictions.

We also considered that due to the fact that we had dissolved our part of the "Joint Dialog Commission", some of the clergy and laity may have interpreted this as being the end to discussions which might lead to administrative unity. (see: SOLIA 12/95, Episcopate Council Meets)

B. "Episcopate Response" — January 24

On January 24, we sent a stern rebuttal addressed "To Whom It May Concern", regarding the proposal of a "Romanian Orthodox Metropolia in USA and Canada." We intended to show that the Council had already given consideration to the subject; and, we responded that: "discussion on this matter would have been included at the March 9 Council Meeting without this fax having been sent." Our letter was categoric in stating that this was a matter not related solely to the Romanian Community but to American Orthodoxy and to Orthodoxy at large. We expressed our great concern that this unofficial "request to the Episcopate Council" might be dispersed to the parishes and general assemblies, thus creating confusion and misinterpretation, resulting in divisions in the parishes and diocese.

We continued in the sternest terms to enjoin them to cease any further activity: "...we specifically and categorically asked that no letters, no petitions, no discussion in parish assemblies be generated...the gravity of the matter...is subject to Church Court proce-

dure."

"This matter is the competence of the Episcopate Office...the Episcopate Council of whose members are five clergy and ten laity...and...the Episcopate Congress."

C. "Opinion Letter" — February 2

It seems, however, that before our letter reached them, an "Ad Hoc Committee" was already making telephone contacts, creating "The Initiative Committee of Forming the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia in the United States and Canada," and circulating a written "Opinion Paper" dated "Presentation of our Lord (2/2/96)." This "Opinion Paper" appeared in Romanian and English, with slight modifications due to linguistic expressions and temperament.

D. "Episcopate Response" — February 27

Only on February 13th, did the Episcopate received a copy of this "Opinion Paper" from a secondary source. We expressed our perplexity with this paper in

response of February 27, stating our "sorrow" that he authors did not send us a copy of the paper and rotesting that the paper was distributed as though it vere an official document of the Episcopate.

We reiterated the procedures for creating policy in external affairs (By-Laws, A.III, S.20, 1) reminding he authors that only the responsible bodies would letermine the time and need for such an initiative and reprimanding them for the act of distributing a paper which appeared to be in contradiction to our directive o do no further promulgating.

We did not question the desirability of unity. Our concern was that the peace of the Episcopate not be hreatened by premature and unofficial statements, nor that any action be proposed without the full participation of clergy and laity.

Our letter stated that: "We all desire that the Church in America be administratively autocephalous, and we also agree that the spiritual needs of ethnic communities must be fulfilled. We would not discourage discussion which might lead to these blessed results. Nevertheless, ... we admonish that the peace and dignity of the Episcopate must be safeguarded and that care must be taken so that private discussion of this matter should not be interpreted as "offical" action taken without full Church participation."

Some individual distributed the letter at large to the Romanian press, and our Office was informed by the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America that a copy of this "Opinion Paper" had also reached His Beatitude, Metropolitan THEODOSIUS, Primate of our Church.

E. "Petition" to the Episcopate Council February 28

On March 1, the Episcopate Office received a second letter/ fax dated February 28, as a formal petition to the Episcopate Council to include on the Agenda of the March 9 meeting the "Formation of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia in the United States and Canada."

The letter ended with a proposal that the: "Initiative Committee would like to send the 'Ad Hoc Committee' to present (clarification) to the Episcopate Council and to the Deans' meeting."

A second letter, "Note of Explanation," was sent with the "Letter of Petition" stating: "We want to be very clear in anyone's mind that our intention is sincere and serious and we don't want to divide the unity of our Episcopate, nor to work against our Bishop."

"...We want to heal the wounds of the past, to remake unity with our brothers...for a future American Patriarchate... strengthen our mission ...and speak in one voice for our needs and our values."

"We believe strongly in the idea that we must put in good order our Orthodox Romanian house to be able to talk and act for the American Patriarchate. As we can see most of the Orthodox brothers in the USA and Canada try to do the same recently. Why should we be the last?"

F. Deans' Meeting — March 8

Every two years, we call a special meeting of all the Deans. This meeting, which had already been called, preceded the Episcopate Council meeting by one day. We also invited the Deans to be present for the Episcopate Council meeting the following day. Among other items on the agenda was the matter of the "Romanian Metropolia."

Although the Episcopate Office had not acted on the proposal of the "Ad Hoc Committee" to attend the Deans' and Council meetings, two members did come to the Diocesan Center, the Vatra, during the Deans' meeting. After consultation with the Deans, we invited the "Ad Hoc Committee" to present its petition. They were thanked by those present; no further discussion was held; they left and the Deans' meeting continued.

G. Episcopate Council Meeting — March 9

The Episcopate Council, among other topics had on its March 9th agenda the proposed "Metropolia". Members were given copies of the "Letter of Petition" and discussion followed. The action taken was to "Table" the Study Committee's recommendation asking the Holy Synod to recognize the Episcopate as an archdiocese and to elevate its hierarch to archbishop. The Council also formed a committee to prepare a study of the question of unity between the two Romanian jurisdictions in North America to be discussed at the Episcopate Congress.

On the following Monday, we had as a houseguest, His Beatitude, Metropolitan THEODOSIUS. Together, we discussed the background of the "Letter of Initiative," the present status of disunity and jurisdictional pluralities in North America and the status of Orthodoxy in the world.

H. Meeting of the Holy Synod — March 18-21

The following week, March 18-21, we were present at the Spring Session of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America. The matter of the "Letter of Initiative" was also on its agenda.

In the minutes of the Holy Synod, we quote the following: "The letter, addressed to some clergy of the Romanian Episcopate (and signed by 13 priests,) expresses a desire that the Episcopate unite with the Romanian Archdiocese and be granted autonomous or autocephalous status in America; ... that their main concern in addressing the letter was to unite the two Romanian Dioceses, and not to separate from the Orthodox Church in America nor to place itself under the omophorion of the Romanian Patriarchate."

"Bishop NATHANIEL also stated that the clergy signing the letter were concerned that the Romanian Orthodox Community was not properly recognized by

SOME EVENTS Cont. from page 5

the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in America...the larger bodies of Albanians, Bulgarians and Romanians under the Orthodox Church in America (being) were represented by only one person."

SOME CONCLUSIONS:

1. The "Initiative Committee" did not propose a unification of the two Romanian Episcopates in North America under the Romanian Patriarchate.

The "Initiative Committee" did propose consideration be given to holding discussions with the Romanian Archdiocese for the purpose of unifying the Orthodox Romanian Community in North America.

3. The Episcopate Council, having considered this matter in previous sessions since 1990, established a committee to prepare a study for presentation to the Episcopate Congress on the possibility of administrative unity between the Romanian Orthodox jurisdictions in North America.

4. The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America favors discussions which might lead to unity of all Orthodox in North America and which lead to a more representational presence of ethnic jurisdictions in the SCOBA or any Episcopal Assembly representing the entire Church in North America.

OUR THOUGHTS ON THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

A. The Ethnic Character of the American Church

The desire for Orthodox unity and the establishment of an American Patriarchate is among the foremost concerns of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America. Being part of the Orthodox Church in America since 1970, along with Albanian, Bulgarian and Mexican faithful, we have the sense of fulfilling the spiritual needs of our Romanian brethren while at the same time being part of a unified Orthodox witness to North America.

We foresee the Church in North America fulfilling a specific responsibility to serve the spiritual needs of the ethnic faithful already here and those yet to come.

We perceive that the continued existence of ethnic jurisdictions and their existing particular structures are fundamentally necessary for stability of the Church at this point in the history of the Church in North America.

We acknowledge the rich variety of Orthodox traditions in North America and praise the Mother Churches for this variegated gift which was brought by immigrants to our shores and which has become an integral part of our common Orthodox witness and patrimony.

B. The American Character of the Church

It is clear that Americans born of ethnic origin are part of a new leavening which is shaping the Church

from a purely immigrant presence to an American witness. Their particular talents and gifts for the Church must be utilized to the fullest. From them, in fact, ought to come the clergy of the future.

The faith in North America has been mightily blessed in the numerous converts to the faith, beginning with the native Alaskans who continue to use their own tongues in the divine services. Others have "seen the true light" and have further enriched the Church with their zeal and fervor to spread the Gospel of salvation.

Thus, the Church is not merely "ethnic" nor exclusively "American", but is truly "catholic" in her composition of all peoples in North America.

C. A Single Synod of Hierarchs in America

We consider that a unified synod of all Orthodox Hierarchs in North America is absolutely necessary; and, we are certain that by the recognition of the autocephalous state of the Church in North America and the establishment of an American Patriarchate, all present jurisdictional concerns will be speedily and satisfactorily resolved through the inworking of the Holy Spirit in the Holy Synod.

D. Spiritual Care for the Ethnic Communities

While we appreciate the Mother Churches' understanding of the message to "Go and preach to all nations" as being interpreted to mean that wherever ethnic people of their background live the Church has concern for them, we promise that these spiritual concerns of each Mother Church for her "ethnic" children in North America will be satisfied by a unified Synod of Bishops guiding the Church in North America.

Therefore, we propose that each Patriarchal Church give a blessing recognizing a "pre-autocephalic" state for its own ethnic community in North America. After each community has been thus blessed, then the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in the name of the Sister Churches, will announce the unified autocephaly of the Church in America which reflects the consensus of the entire Church.

We surmise that the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople has the most to gain by the recognition of an American Patriarchate which would have a strong unified voice in various arenas of American society.

We humbly offer the concentrated and unified talents and gifts of the American Church for the service of world Orthodoxy and her Sister Churches.

+ NATHANIEL, Bishop Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America The Feast of Feasts, Pascha 1996

Vatra Romaneasca Grass Lake, Michigan, USA

JUNE ISSUE DEAL

JUNE ISSUE DEADLINE

May 10

THE ASCENSION

Cont. from page 2

ion comes. We know perfectly well that it is one of he very great Christian feasts, and yet, despite ourelves, it seems like a parting, a separation, and that fter it, our Lord is not with us in quite the same way ny longer. The disciples did not react like this. They ould have been overwhelmed with grief but, on the ontrary, they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy" Luke 24:52). We, too, can try and enter into this joy of the Ascension. Why does the Ascension bring joy o Christians?

First of all, the glory of our Lord must be very precious to us, and the Ascension is the crown of his earthly mission. He has accomplished on earth the whole mission which he had received from the Father. It is to the Father that his whole being reaches out. Now he will receive from the Father the welcome that his victory over sin and death - a victory gained so grievously - has merited for him. Now he will be glorified in heaven. The glory and the desire of our Lord are surely more important to us than the sort of 'perceptible consolations' that we might receive from his presence. Let us know how to love our Lord enough to rejoice in his own joy.

Then the Ascension marks God's acceptance of the Son's whole work of reparation. The Resurrection was the first dazzling sign of this acceptance, and Pentecost will be the last sign. The cloud which today envelopes Jesus and ascends with him to heaven represents the smoke of the sacrifice rising from the altar to God. The sacrifice is accepted, and the victim is admitted to God's presence where it will continue to be offered in an eternal and heavenly manner. The work of our salvation has been accomplished and is blessed.

Jesus does not return to his Father in isolation. It was the incorporeal Logos which came down among men. But today it is the Word made flesh, both true God and true man, who enters the kingdom of heaven. Jesus brings into it the human nature which he had assumed. He opens the door of the kingdom to humanity. As if by proxy, we take possession of the benefits which are offered and made possible to us. "(God) raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2.6). There are places destined for us in the kingdom, if we are faithful. Our presence is desired and awaited.

The Ascension makes thoughts of heaven more immediate, more actual to us. [What exactly is heaven? Theologically, there would be nothing impossible in heaven being a 'place', transcending our empirical space. But, in any case, heaven is a state: a state of perfect happiness. Primarily and essentially, this happiness consists in the vision of God - 'the beatific vision' - and in intimate union with the Persons of the Holy Trinity and their life of love. Being part of the

divine life, source of all perfections and of all bliss, is an ocean of infinite joy. Then we shall find in God and near him all those people and those things whose principle he is. This is what we can say with certainty about heaven - which remains a mystery. More simply, let us think what it would be like to have constant sight of our Lord, to be close to him always, living a life penetrated by his and forever fixed in his.] Do we think of our permanent home often enough? For most Christians, life in heaven is no more than a supplement - of which they have but a very hazy notion - to life on earth. Life in heaven is seen somewhat as a postscript, an appendix, to a book whose text is formed by earthly life. But it is the opposite which is true. Our earthly life is but the preface to the book. Life in heaven will be its main text, and this text is endless. To make use of another image, our earthly life is but a tunnel, narrow, dark - and very short - which opens onto a magnificent, sunlit landscape. We think too much of what our life now is. We do not think enough of what it will be. "No ear has heard, no eye has seen any god but you act like this for those who trust him" (Isa. 64.4).

At matins for this feast, we sang: "We who live in this world, let us feast like the angels...." That is to say: let us open our minds more to the angels, and try to enter into their feelings, experiencing something of what they experience when the Son returns to the Father; let us go ahead in spirit and be near the Blessed Virgin Mary and the glorified saints, who will be our true co-citizens: "For us, our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the saviour we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ..." (Phil 3.20). Our lives would be transformed if, from now on, we threw our hearts over the barrier, beyond this world, into the kingdom where is found not only our own true good but also the true good of those whom we love.

When the disciples had been separated from Jesus, they remained full of hope, for they knew that they were to receive the Spirit. "(He) told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised" (Acts 1.4). The cloud surrounds Jesus, but this cloud is coloured already by the fire of Pentecost. Jesus, in going away from us, leaves in us an attitude which is one not of regret, but rather of joyous and trustful awaiting.

Jesus's departure has been both an act of benediction and an act of adoration, the one corresponding to the other: "Now as he blessed them, he withdrew from them and was carried up to heaven. They worshipped him and then went back to Jerusalem full of joy..." (Luke 24.51). This is what the feast of the Ascension should be to us. If Jesus withdraws with an act of blessing, and if we adore Jesus as he withdraws (we speak figuratively), we will get up filled with new power - which comes from this adoration, this blessing - and we, like the apostles, will return 'with great joy'.

A.R.F.O.R.A. **CONGRESS** CONVOCATION

In conformity with Article II, Section 2 of the Bylaws, we hereby convoke the

48th ANNUAL ARFORA CONGRESS

May 30 - June 2, 1996

St. Mary Romanian Orthodox Church 854 Woodbridge, St. Paul, Minnesota 55117 Parish Priest:

Rev. Fr. Mihai Cerghizan - (612) 489-5618 General Chairperson: Georgeta Poliac - (612) 486-0680

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Thursday, May 30

Registration at the Holiday Inn 6-9 p.m.

Hospitality for Clergy, Preotese, Del-

egates and Past Presidents

Friday, May 31

Executive Board Meeting at the Hall 9:00 a.m.

Late Registration and breakfast at the

Trip to Mall of America 9:30 a.m.

12:30 p.m. Lunch

OPENING SESSION OF THE 1:30 p.m.

CONGRESS

Akathist to St. Paraschiva, Memorial 4:00 p.m.

Service and Confession

Dinner - Social 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 1

9:00 a.m. Breakfast

9:45 a.m. Congress reconvenes

12:30 p.m. Lunch

Congress reconvenes 1:30 p.m.

4:00 p.m. Great Vespers (Photographs after)

Banquet - Izvorasul Romanian Dance 7:00 p.m.

Ensemble with Valachia Orchestra

Sunday, June 2

9:00 a.m. Matins

10:00 a.m. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy

12:30 p.m. Brunch - Farewell

ACCOMMODATIONS

Holiday Inn, 2201 Burns Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55119 Phone: (612) 731-2220

DIRECTIONS

To the Hotel

From East I-94, after crossing Minnesota/Wisconsin border, proceed west on I-94 (to St. Paul) exit on McKnight. Turn left. Holiday Inn is one block on the right (Burns Avenue).

His Grace **Bishop Nathaniel**

Invites faithful and friends of our Episcopate to take part in the traditional commemoration of

MEMORIAL DAY

Monday, May 27, 1996 • Vatra Romaneasca

PROGRAM

Hierarchal Divine Liturgy 10:30 a.m.

Memorial for deceased service forces 12:00

at AROY flag plaza

Parastas at the cemetery pavilion

and blessing of the graves

Pomana lunch 1:00 p.m.

CLERGY CHANGES

Elevated to the rank of Archpriest by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the OCA, on March 19, 1996:

Rev. Fr. John Dinu Rev. Fr. George Zmed

HIERARCHAL **SCHEDULE**

March 8, Friday. Vatra. Presided over Episcopate All-Deans' Conference.

March 9, Saturday. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Presided over Episcopate Council Meet-

March 10, Sunday. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition

Monastery. Divine Liturgy.

March 14-17. Thursday-Sunday. Regina, SK. Ft. Qu'Appelle. Cantor's School.

March 18-20. Monday-Wednesday. Syosset, NY. Spring Session of the Holy Synod of Bishops.

March 23-24. Chicago, IL. St. Mary. Saturday: Great Vespers. Sunday: Divine Liturgy.

March 31, Sunday. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Divine Liturgy.

April 7, Palm Sunday. Warren, MI. Descent Holy Spirit. Divine Liturgy. Traditional Palm Sunday Banquet. *

To the Church

From the East: Continue west on I-94 to St. Paul. Exit at 12th St. (State Capitol). Proceed straight ahead for 5 blocks where the road turns into Rice St. Stay right. Proceed north on Rice St. for approximately mile. Turn left on Atwater St. Proceed 2 blocks to Woodbridge St. St. Mary's is on the right. \$

ARFORA ALMANAC

May, 1996

Dear Sisters and Supporters of ARFORA:

It is with deep sorrow that we inform you of the falling asleep in the Lord of our friend and A.R.F.O.R.A. Board member — Connie Meszaros. Please include her in your prayers. May her memory be eternal. Connie was in charge of the St. Parascheva Project for A.R.F.O.R.A. Her goal was to raise the receipts for this project to \$6.000. She succeeded.

While sitting at my computer, writing this article, the snow is coming down outside and the March winds have not yet left us. Our long-awaited summer is supposed to be just around the corner, and surely the flowers must now be starting to bloom in your neigh-

ornoou.

This is the count-down before the A.R.F.O.R.A. Congress in St. Paul — May 30 to June 2. We are expecting a full complement of delegates. The Congress Committee has done a lot of work to prepare for our arrival, so please, don't disappoint them. Check your Guide Book to be sure all projects have been completed. We are just short of our budget estimates on the St. Parascheva Project, so please send in your proceeds if you have not already done so. Auxiliary Sunday was in March — these proceeds are to be sent to the Treasurer of R.O.E.A. The most recent project is the A.R.F.O.R.A. Retreat. The one in Saskatchewan was held at St. George, Regina, with Retreat Master Fr. Hieromonk Joseph Morris. His topic centered around St. Mary of Egypt. Please let Louise Gibb or Rev. Fr. Vasile Susan have the details (topic, numbers in attendance, etc.) on your Retreat so that a report may be prepared for the Congress. We hope the details on the R.O.E.A. Scholarships have been advertised in your parish so that young people of university age may apply for financial assistance through the R.O.E.A. and R.O.E.A. auxiliaries' scholarship programs. I am still waiting for suggested A.R.F.O.R.A. constitution and bylaws revisions from the ladies auxiliaries.

A word to the wise — I read this somewhere but cannot put my hand on the quote — basically it is this: Worry takes a lot of your time but doesn't get you anywhere. The message is for us to stop worrying, take action and get the job done. Then, enjoy our free

time.

I talked to Leona Barbu on the telephone in March. Leona is one of the past presidents of A.R.F.O.R.A. She is definitely showing improvement; she is able to walk a dozen steps with assistance; and is regaining some movement in her right hand. Keep up the good work Leona!

Happy Mother's Day to all the mothers, grandmothers and mothers-to-be. And for those mothers

BROTHERHOOD OF CANADA SCHOLARSHIP OFFERED

The Orthodox Brotherhood of Canada is offering a \$250 (Canadian) Scholarship to a student pursuing post-secondary education. One scholarship is awarded annually.

The applicant must be an active member of a parish under the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (or as stipulated in the preamble of the application) and must be a permanent resident of Canada.

Those interested may obtain applications by writing to the Orthodox Brotherhood of Canada Scholarship Fund, Box 3512, Regina, Saskatchewan, S4P 3J8.

Note: Completed applications must be received by July 15, 1996. The Scholarship will be awarded by September 15, 1996. &

SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINES REMINDER

ARFORA Undergraduate Scholarship for Women - May 15 See "Solia", January 1996, p. 14

itru Goles Goldy-Gemu Scholarshin - Ma

Dumitru Golea Goldy-Gemu Scholarship - May 31 See "Solia", January 1996, p. 13

Wm. R. Stanitz / AROY Scholarship - July 1 See "Solia", March 1996, p. 11

ANNOUNCEMENT

To All Members of C.G.R.D. Inc. (College Graduates of Romanian Descent)

We will make a cash refund of dues to all members of C.G.R.D. Inc.

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who have fallen asleep in the Lord, please remember them in your prayers, and may their memories be eternal.

God Bless Us All!!

(Dr.) Eleanor Bujea, President

NURTURING THE ORTHODOX FAMILY

by John T. Chirban, Ph.D., Th.D.

"The modern family is the building block of society."

"The contemporary family is slowly decaying."

We have all been exposed to such clichés that underscore the importance and endangerment of the family. Yet we seem to be at a loss about how to enhance the family structure. To respond to this dilemma, we need to consider facts about the current status of "the family" and clarify how we can nurture the Orthodox family in our own homes.

The psychological profiles of family members, in general, reflect a lack of emotional fulfillment, entanglements and enmeshed relationships. As a people, Orthodox Christians whose roots are based in traditional cultures, e.g., Greeks, Russians, Serbians, tend to dismiss such alarming problems as alien to both the

culture and tradition.

There is no question that, in the United States, Orthodox Christian Americans have felt the impact of American cultural issues: drugs, alcohol, suicide, changing sex roles and role confusion, sexual promiscuity and its epidemics, as well as modern day epicureanism and hedonism have all made an impact. It may be helpful to recognize that these are all spiritually-oriented disorders. They are often symptoms of disordered homes and indelibly engrave their pathology on otherwise healthy children. The presence of these disorders and their symptoms are often less visible in the relatively affluent or the more culturally endowed people of our time. Middle-class America is insulated, or chooses to be insulated, from the reality of inharmonious homes. We do this vis-a-vis material comforts and worldly success — cushioning ourselves until "somehow," "out of nowhere," a symptom pushes through the facade in the form of a divorce, drugs or suicide. In this way, comforts blur our vision of the importance of our spiritual lives.

I am suggesting that spiritual vitality is at the heart of the Orthodox family. But what exactly is spiritual vitality, and how do we know if spiritual vitality ex-

ists in our homes?

One test of spiritual vitality in our homes may be answered by asking direct questions: "What do I believe?" and "How are my beliefs made manifest in my life?" Our answers to these questions could be a barometer of our spiritual vitality and of our genuine life in Christ. Frequently, many families have no explicit beliefs and lack meaning and purpose. Life becomes simply a series of temporal stimulations. This ambiguity in life seems to be implicit in our culture, but it also defines what it means to be "existentially sick." If a family has no direction, it cannot be going anywhere. And if we understand the Devil (etymologically, diavolos, as the one who divides) as the author

of chaos, this setting provides the breeding ground for trouble.

Many families perceive that they are "achieving" if children "get" married, "have" a family, and "make" money. To be sure, many try this and find that it secures neither the marriage nor the family. Nor does it make family members more intrinsically fulfilled. Families' resources are exhausted with the expectation that such pleasures and luxuries as vacations, recreation and extravagant homes will constitute "success." What is discovered, again, is that in spite of such efforts, the family and its members are neither secured nor protected.

Clearly, a family is not simply the product of a wedding ring or children; it is rather a process and an experience of some complexity and "something more." One psychologist identifies this "something more" as pothos, a virtuous yearning, or a "passionful" pride.

Such filial love is expressed with equivalent power by Massachusetts Senator Paul Tsongas, who prematurely retired from the Senate in his early forties after learning that he had a chronic, terminal lymphoma. He wanted to spend his last years with his family. Tsongas stated, "I've yet to meet anyone who chose family over career and regretted it. No one on his death bed ever said, 'I didn't spend enough time with my business'."

Yet, if we are able to speak objectively, we must recognize that there is nothing unique about culturally-based love in the family. Jews maintain this love, secular humanists endorse it, and, as a native of Cicero, Illinois, the "work place" of Al Capone, I can attest that even the Mafia practice it. Caring families are not necessarily Orthodox families. There is, however, another dimension in the Orthodox family which may help us to understand its finer elements. What matters is the degree to which the pothos of the home is influenced by the essence of the faith.

We need to ask: Is mere influence enough? Have we realized the potential power of our faith in marriage and the family? Or, more directly: Would it not be better for us to experience the full essence of the Orthodox family rather than merely to be influenced

by it?

The Essence of the Orthodox Family

It should not be surprising to us that Jesus Christ had hardly anything to say about the basic family, as a building block, since a family is not defined by its structure but rather by its substance. The New Testament speaks of "God's household" and the "family of believers" (Ephesians 2:19, Galatians 6:10). Scriptural reference addresses what *fills* the home. For the Christian, the essence of the family, of life, is achieved in the spirit of God. A home based upon the resources of human beings alone does things that human beings do. A home based upon the resources of God does things beyond human imagination.

Therefore, the Orthodox family and home must recreate the particular elements which distinguish the Church; it must reflect the marks of the Church. As Orthodox Christians, we must see family life flowing ut of the life of the Church, not vice versa. For when isordered homes influence the Church, entire conregations may lose their course. The priority must be Jod, who provides direction. Left to human design, he family becomes lost in the forces and values that urround it.

What are the elements of the Church? What marks of the Church should families properly manifest in the nome? Holiness. Humility. Love. And action.

Holiness

St. Paul writes "to the saints" in his epistles, referring to Christians as those people who believe and work as they believe. Such are holy people, not percet, but people who bring "God's power" into their laily lives. Christians who do not take their holy dentity seriously lose their greatest asset — the chance to be in the process of experiencing and achieving their potential. It is through such holiness that we can be made into "new beings," thereby experiencing the "God-vision," theoptia, to know a resurrected existence

St. Gregory the Theologian says, "It is a good thing to speak of God but still better to purify oneself for God." A Christian home is one where family members learn how to affirm their goodness, and to correct their sins. Homes must convey holiness through the experiences of respecting, valuing and caring. We can do this practically by understanding both our sins and our virtues. By acknowledging our "state," and improving our "selves," we embark upon the process toward holiness. In so doing, one takes God and faith seriously.

Humility

When St. Augustine was asked to describe the Church, he said, "The first thing I can say about the Church is humility. The second thing that I can say about the Church is humility. The third thing that I can say about the Church is humility." Certainly humility is the virtue upon which all other Christian characteristics are built. Humility sets the stage for listening. If one can be humble, and listen, he or she can hear God, "other," and self.

Most of what we know about the communication gaps between parents, children and generations stems from the problem of poor listening. The individual is often so absorbed in his or her own thoughts that the needs, wishes, and concerns of others are rarely heard,

let alone understood.

When we practice humility, we are open to God's grace and the contribution of others. We are able to hear the voices that influence us — both inside and outside of our own minds. With humility, we can hear the needs of our family and respond in kind. Humility is a harbinger of love.

Love

The Greek work for community, koinotoita, literally means communication. In the faith, as we com-

municate, we are bonded as a unit. Communication is therefore the process of love. One of the greatest diabolical attacks on the family is poor communication: husbands against wives; fathers against sons; and brothers against sisters. Through effective communication, love can nurture the wholeness of the family unit. The family, like the Church, must be a community, having a common unity. Christian communication, intimacy, and love cannot be separated from the love of God, as it is God who models and fuels "good relationships." Such family spirituality requires that we pray and talk about our relationship with God.

At the same time, love in the home needs to be expressed and experienced as friendship. The definition that I prefer for "friendship" is illustrated with two circles that overlap one another, and one of those circles is divided in two. The drawing is accompanied with the maxim, "A friend doubles your joys and divides your sorrows." This concrete definition of a friend can also serve as a test for those who care about us. Indeed, those who love us double our enthusiasm and divide our pain. Such a definition of friendship should be modeled and experienced by the members of a family. Friendship of family encourages, comforts and enables each member to grow.

One Christian family prays openly together at the end of each day. If the husband and wife are arguing, they bring the "issue" to prayer, because above all else they agree to pray together. In this way, their pattern of seeing arguments from a single point of view is broken by their commitment to God through communication. Through loving communication and friendship we share quality time with one another. St. Paul insists, "... Love is long suffering, love is kind; love is not self seeking, it is humble and is not puffed up ... But it rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (I Corinthians 13:4-7). These characteristics of love provide the kind of solid reinforcement upon which a Christian home is built.

Action

Christ says, "You shall know them by their fruits!" (Matthew 7:16). In the Epistle of St. James, we learn, "Faith without works is a dead thing!" (James 2:17). The criteria for eternal life, according to Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, is through works: feeding the hungry, giving shelter to the homeless, visiting the prisoners, and caring for the afflicted (Matthew 25). Doing works bears witness to our faith.

By living in an Orthodox family, a child learns how to be cared for in the home so that he or she may give care in the world. The product of our family reflects the degree to which we have made the effort to connect the things we say or believe to the things we do. An Orthodox family integrates faith and life; it is real and ideal. It is holiness, humility, love and action. Such are the marks of the Church, and they are also the critical dimensions of the family. These qualities

Editor's Note: The following is excerpted from "Life Transfigured," Pascha 1996 edition, a publication of Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration, Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, Phone: (412) 758-4002.

PROSPHORA: AN OFFERING TO GOD

I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of his bread he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh (Jn. 6:51).

As Orthodox Christians know, the bread that is prepared to be used in the eucharistic offering to our Lord in the Liturgy is called prosphora. Prosphora is a Greek word meaning "offering." While its use has remained the same as in the early Church, its form and markings have evolved to those that we are familiar

with today.

Bread with markings and various shapes was quite common in antiquity, among pagans as well as Christians. People decorated or impressed symbols on bread that was baked, bought and eaten every day, as well as on bread offered in religious rites (George Galavaris, *Bread and the Liturgy*, Madison, WI, 1970, p. 22). It is the "Christianization" of these forms and marks that resulted in our bread of offering (*ibid*, p. 26).

The details concerning the first eucharistic loaves are not to be found in the writings of the early Fathers. An Orthodox scholar explains possible reasons for

this:

Although there is enough literary evidence to enable liturgists to reconstruct the stages in the development of the celebration of the Eucharist since apostolic times, the texts of the Early Church do not give a detailed description of the bread

used in the liturgy.

Probably the texts are silent because the forms and symbols were known to all and interpreted correctly. The use of bread in worship was delivered to the Christian communities by practice itself, before any formulation had found a place in the written documents. This is better understood if one remembers that the celebration of the Eucharist predates any written source. The Sacrament was celebrated as soon as a Christian group was formed. In Jerusalem, for example, the Eucharist was performed immediately after Pentecost, that is, twenty years or more before the writing of the Synoptics [Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke].

Other factors may account for this silence. Perhaps neither the form of the bread nor the symbols on it were considered to be of primary importance by the Fathers of the first centuries. They had more urgent matters to deal with: the defense of Christianity, the protection of believers from heretical thinking, and supporting the growth of the Church. It may also be that they

intentionally avoided making public statements about the Sacrament, its elements, and exactly how it was performed, for security reasons (*ibid*,

p. 7)

While the Church was under persecution, the Christian symbols became cryptic, hiding the cross in simple decorative motifs (*ibid*, p. 43). It is believed that in the early development of the Eucharist, especially when it was still celebrated with the agape meal, or love feast, the symbol used on the bread varied (*ibid*, p. 59). The IC XC NI KA that we are familiar with today seems to have first appeared during the fifth century, although, due to lack of written evidence, this is difficult to prove (*ibid*, p. 70).





Two prosphora traditions are most commonly followed today. The Russian tradition uses a small seal, stamped on five loaves in memory of the multiplication of the five loaves in the wilderness. These small loaves are also made with two layers to represent both the two-fold nature of Christ and the uniting of heaven and earth. The Greek style, on the other hand, uses one large loaf marked with IC XC NI KA in the

center, surrounded by several other seals.

The priest prepares the offering in the part of the Liturgy called the *proskomidia*. The center of the seal (in both traditions) reads IC XC NI KA, which means "Jesus Christ The Victor" [or Jesus Christ Conquers]. The priest cuts one seal in the shape of a cube to be offered as the "Lamb," which becomes Christ's Body. He also removes pieces and places them next to the Lamb on the diskos (paten) "in memory of John the Baptist, the prophets, apostles, hierarchs, martyrs, monastic saints, healers, and the whole company of the righteous ... for the bishop of the given church, for the civil authorities of the country and for all of the faithful both living and dead" (Fr. Thomas Hopko, The Orthodox Faith, Vol. 2, Syosset, NY, 1975, p. 160-1). In this way the whole Church participates in the offering to God.

Preparing this bread is a very special and holy service to God. It is important to consider how to approach this holy service. By reflecting on the bread's use, the baking of it becomes a prayerful and solemn undertaking. In the home where there is only one kitchen used for all cooking, the baking area may be purified with holy water first. Also the equipment used should be kept separate and used only for prosphora baking. The ideal would be to have a separate area and oven to prepare the prosphora, but this is usually found only in monasteries. Only the purest ingredients available should be used. A suggested recipe

appears below.

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PROSPHORA Cont. from page 12

If you are interested in performing this service for your parish, speak with your priest. He can help you obtain the needed seal and bless you to make this offering to God.

PROSPHORA

(one large loaf)

5 cups flour (sifted) 1/2 teaspoon salt approx. 1¹/₄ cups warm water 1 teaspoon yeast

Dissolve the yeast in warm water. Add salt and flour and knead until smooth. Place in bowl, cover, and let rise one half hour in a warm place. Form into a ball, flatten with palm, roll gently with rolling pin. Stamp very hard. Place in 9" floured baking pan. Cover and let rise in a warm place about 1 hour. Bake

for approximately 1 hour at 325 degrees.

For more information a very good video has recently been made available showing the entire baking process and discussing the history and symbolism of prosphora. This video was filmed at the **Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery in Rives** Junction, MI. It is available from Firebird Videos, P.O. Box 303, Belleville, MI 48112. 1 hour. \$19.95 + \$3 postage. *

NURTURING FAMILY Cont. from page 11 constitute our Christian identity and ultimately our well-being.

Nurturing the Orthodox family is critical for the individual and society. By drawing upon the natural, spiritual resources of the Orthodox faith, the sustenance of the individual, the home and the Church are assured and all are nurtured. #

John T. Chirban, Ph.D., Th.D. is a professor of psychology and co-director of Counseling and Spiritual Development at Hellenic College-Holy Cross School of Theology and an advanced fellow in behavioral medicine at Harvard Medical School at The Cambridge Hospital.

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REDUCING WORRIES -AN A.R.F.O.R.A. PRESENTATION

Who doesn't worry? Are we spending a lot of unnecessary time and energy on "worry." How can we spend our time more productively, accomplish the work we need to do and stay healthy while we are doing it?

This is a concern for A.R.F.O.R.A. Board Member, Maria Ciobotaru. At her suggestion, A.R.F.O.R.A. embarked on a pilot project in her Cleveland parish to deliver workshops in many areas to help young women in our parishes resolve their problems. In an attempt to share the information of the workshops, short summaries of the presentations will be published so that we may all benefit from her research.

Worry is defined as "being uneasy of mind." Another definition is "to exert great care and anxiety." The most crippling definition, however, is "to choke or strangle." It would be wise, in considering these three definitions to reflect on the prayer of Francis of Assisi: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference."

Worry is a "worrisome" thing. It consumes our energies; it robs us of our health; it occupies our time; it prevents us from getting on with our work. Worry engulfs us in procrastination. We don't find a solution to a problem, because we fear our solution may be the wrong solution. We hesitate making a decision on important issues — and by hesitating, we, in fact, have made the decision "to take no action."

Maria believes there are four common causes of worry: 1) marital and social problems; 2) financial problems and grief; 3) loneliness and 4) long-cherished resentments. She sets out three steps, calling them "anti-worry techniques."

- 1. Analyze the situation fearlessly and honestly and figure out what is the worst that could possibly happen.
- 2. Prepare yourself to accept the worst if necessary.
- 3. Calmly devote time and energy to try to improve upon the worst which you accepted mentally.

What is an effective way to stop worrying? Maria advised her workshop participants to follow several

- 1. Define the problem. If we clearly see the problem. - e.g. getting a new job, buying a new home, having that operation, moving to another community - then, we can clearly consider how the problem will affect us and how we may resolve it. If we don't know where we are going, how will we ever get there?
- 2. Determine what caused the problem. Can we fix the cause and thereby resolve the problem? Sometimes there are several events that caused the problem to arise. Determine when this problem arose and grew so large. attage

3. Examine the possible solutions to the problem.

4. List and consider several solutions to the problem. By weighing the "pros" and "cons", determine which solution offers the best results.

5. Take action. This last step is the most important one. Many people think that, by ignoring the problem or by taking no action, the problem will go away. If it is a small problem, this is a possibility. In most instances, however, the problem will not go away. It will result in "worry." Worry results in loss of sleep, irritableness, loss of friends, sickness. and many other things we may not recognize as happening to us.

Worries can affect our physical body with heart disease, digestive-tract ulcers and high blood pressure. We must accept the fact that problems and worries about those problems are part of life. As mature adults, it is up to us to learn how to control our lives: A woman with a strong religious faith, a healthy attitude, positive thinking, and with a conviction to face her problems can solve them without being physically or mentally affected. What helps is the use of relaxation and recreation techniques including religious beliefs, adequate sleep, listening to music and laughter. Keeping busy and absorbed in daily work routines allow us no time for worry. Maria advises to let go of the small irritations.

Maria compares life to an hourglass. One grain of sand passes, one at a time through the narrow neck of the hourglass. No matter how impatient we get, we can only do one task at a time ... we can only live one day at a time ... one hour at a time ... one minute at a time. The process cannot be hurried. We must make the best of it. She quotes from a psalm: "This is the day which the Lord has made, we will rejoice in it and be glad." Life is too precious to squander it on "worry" — instead, live it, one moment at a time. If a decision is required, after careful thought, make the decision. We may not have chosen the best decision, but we are then able to get on with living our lives.

By making a decision, we exercise faith in ourselves and faith in God who made us in his image. Prayer and a strong religious faith will banish the worries, the anxieties, the strains and the fears that cause more than half of all our ills. Faith will make us strong in health, in mind, and in our religious beliefs. My father always said that we must "have the courage of our convictions." In other words, make a decision on the best information available to us at that moment and don't look back.

In closing, I repeat the words of Francis of Assisi: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things cannot change; the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference."

Dr. Eleanor Bujea

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DIOCESAN EVENT UPDATES

Descent of the Holy Spirit Church June 2: Warren, MI 80th Anniversary Sts. Peter & Paul Church **June 29:** Flintoft, SK 85th Anniversary October 5-6: Orthodox Brotherhood of Canada

Annual Conference St. George Church, Winnipeg, MB

Orthodox Brotherhood U.S.A. Oct. 18-20: Annual Conference Holy Resurrection Church, Warren, OH

PARISH REGISTER

BAPTISMS

Atnadja, Irina Marianna, daughter of Petru & Irina Atnadja, Detroit, Mi. Descent Holy Spirit, Warren, MI. Godparents: Ionica & Ileana Popescu.

Atnadja, Petru George, son of Petru & Irina Atnadja, Detroit, MI. Descent Holy Spirit, Warren, MI. Godpar-

ents: Ionica & Ileana Popescu.

Gheorghita, Sabrina Elena, daughter of Doru & Alina Gheorghita, Hickory Hills, IL. Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL. Godparents: Florin & Tatiana Curmei.

Lang, Mara, daughter of Herman & Daniela Lang, Kitchener, ON. St. John, Kitchener, ON. Godparent: Radu Toma.

Hebert, Blaise Christian, son of Scott & Christina Hebert, Dearborn Hts., MI. Sts. Peter & Paul, Dearborn Hts., MI. Godparents: John & Connie Surducan.

Prada, Andrea Kiana, daughter of Roberto & Otilia C. Prada, Mt. Prospect, IL. Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL. Godparents: Olga O'Dowd; Michael & Elizabeth

Smeu, Cristina, daughter of Stanel & Elena Smeu, Chicago, IL. Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL. Godparent: Mirela

Iovaneseu.

Terhesh, Alexander Joseph, son of George III & Cynthia Terhesh, Akron, OH. Presentation Our Lord, Fairlawn, OH. Godparents: Edwin & Maria Waterhouse.

Tonita, Jennifer Lynn, daughter of Ronald & Wendy Tonita, Regina, SK. St. George, Regina, SK. Godparent: Rick

Tonita.

Veresan, Anthony George, son of Dorel & Laura Veresan, Dearborn Hts., MI. Descent Holy Spirit, Warren, MI. Godparents: Ilie & Ancuta Petrovici.

Verone, Taylor Lynn, daughter of Jeffrey J. & Bernadette R.V. Verone, Ellwood City, PA. St. Elias, Ellwood City, PA. Godparents: Stanley Miles & Docia Jacobs.

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Casares (Suciu) David Andrew, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI. V. Rev. Fr. Laurence Lazar.

Jones, Laurie Ann, Grosse Pointe, MI. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI. Bishop Nathaniel and V. Rev. Fr. Laurence Lazar.

Sharp, Aaron Shane, Madison Hts., MI. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI. Bishop Nathaniel and V. Rev. Fr.

Suciu, Carla Suzanne, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI. V. Rev. Fr. Laurence Lazar.

Suciu, Sloane Mary, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI. V. Rev. Fr. Laurence Lazar. Suciu, Tyler Christopher, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI. St.

George Cathedral, Southfield, MI. V. Rev. Fr. Laurence

Vincik, Bernadette Renee, Ellwood City, PA. St. Elias, Ellwood City, PA. Fr. Ray Samoila.

MARRIAGES

Sarbu, Mihai B. and Ioana A. Constantinescu, Mississauga, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON. Godparents: Viorel & Liliana Pana.

DECEASED

Almeranti, Michael S., 4. St. George Cathedral, Southfield

Bistarkey, Rabecca, 84. Holy Trinity, Youngstown, OH Bodnar, Florence, 87. Holy Trinity, Youngstown, OH.

Bogdan, John, 72. St. George, Canton, OH. Bonca, Aron, 71. St. George, Toronto, ON.

Bucurestean, Gregory P., 76. St. George Cathedrall Southfield, MI.

Budac, Pearl, 86. St. George, Canton, OH. Butoi, Margareta, 72. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH. Cirisan, Pavel, 67. St. John, Kitchener, ON.

Daramus, Mary, 79. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH.

Denghel, Valeria, 73. St. George Cathedral, Southfield

Ellaschuk (Cherpeta), Anita, 98. St. George, Regina, SK Elle, Margaret, 74. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI Floco, Pearl (Paraschiva), 90. Holy Trinity, Youngstown

Laughlin, Lucille, V. 79. Presentation Our Lord, Fairlawn OH.

Lucuta, Mary, 79. Holy Nativity, Chicago, OH. Manescu, Eufrosina, 94. St. Geoge, Toronto, ON.

Meszaros, Constance L., 53. Presentation Our Lord Fairlawn, OH.

Neagu, Victor, 73. Holy Trinity, Youngstown, OH. Opincarne, Daniel, 77. Holy Trinity, Youngstown, OH. Radoi, Tarsita, 81. St. George, Toronto, ON. Reader, Valeria, 77. St. George, Canton, OH.

Sirb, Paul, 75. Perris, CA.

Teohari, Darius V., 25. St. George, Toronto, ON.

SOLIA

March 16 - March 29, 1996

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DESPRE ANUMITE EVENIMENTE PETRECUTE ÎN COMUNITATEA ROMÂNILOR ORTODOCȘI DIN STATELE UNITE ȘI CANADA

Şi

IMPACTUL LOR ASUPRA UNITĂȚII BISERICII ÎN AMERICA DE NORD

Şi

REFLECȚIILE NOASTRE ASUPRA UNITĂȚII BISERICII ÎN AMERICA DE NORD

INTRODUCERE

Raţiunea întocmirii acestui document este buna loastră intenție de a risipi îngrijorările mărturisite louă de către preoții și mirenii Episcopiei noastre, create datorită difuzării unor scrisori neoficiale. Acestea au fost scrise și distribuite din dorința unora le a se iniția o formă de dialog între Episcopia Ortodoxă Română din America (Vatra) și Arhidioceza Ortodoxă Română din America și Canada (Riopelle), pentru promovarea unei unități administrative a Bisericii între cele două jurisdicții.

Ingrijorarea multora reflectă teama că o asemenea unificare ar putea atrage după sine capitularea autonomiei noastre, punând astfel Episcopia sub autoritarea Sfântului Sinod al Bisericii Române.

Episcopia nu se află în prezent în dialog nici cu Patriarhia Română, nici cu Arhidioceza Română din America. Şi întrucât nimic nu se află în discuție, nu există nici condiții de luat în considerație, nici acțiuni de întreprins. Cu toate acestea, socotim necesar să expunem observațiile noastre asupra scrisorilor și a subiectului în sine.

LIPSA DE UNITATE ȘI UNITATEA ORTODOXĂ ÎN AMERICA DE NORD

Socotim deasemenea necesar să predoslovim observațiile noastre cu câteva reflecții asupra prezentei lipse de unitate administrativă, cât și a unității sacramentale generale în Ortodoxia Americii de Nord, din care face parte și comunitatea română.

Biserica în America de Nord se bucură de o unitate sacramentală, evidentă în împreuna-slujire a Sfintelor Taine de către ierarhii ei. Pe de altă parte, cu toate că există un fel de adunare a ierarhilor, ("Permanenta Consfătuire a Episcopilor Ortodocși din America"/SCOBA), care într'un sens larg reflectă identitatea sacramentală a Bisericii, aceasta rămâne totuși o grupare neformală și neoficială. La ora actuală nu există un singur Sfânt Sinod căruia săi aparțină toți ierarhii, precum este rânduiala în oricare biserică autocefală (de sine stătătoare).

Datorită realităților istorice ale trecutului, un asemenea Sinod unificat, care să vorbească cu un singur glas și o singură inimă în numele Bisericii, n'a luat încă ființă. Cu toate acestea, el are adânci rădăcini în trecut și așteptăm cu nerăbdare să înflorească în zilele noastre.

In 1970, Biserica Rusă a recunoscut autocefalia Mitropoliei Ruse din America de Nord și Sinodul ei Mitropolitan a devenit "Sfântul Sinod" al Bisericii Ortodoxe din America. În același an, Episcopia noastră s'a integrat Bisericii Ortodoxe din America și Episcopul Valerian a devenit astfel membru al acestui Sfânt Sinod, care mai târziu l'a ridicat la rangul de arhiepiscop. Astăzi,noi, deasemenea, suntem parte al aceluiași Sfânt Sinod, care include ierarhii credincioșilor albanezi și bulgari.

Mai există totuși un număr larg de etnii ortodoxe ale căror ierarhi fac parte din Sinoadele propriei lor Biserici Mame aflate în afara continentului nostru și care de aceea nu iau parte la lucrările Sinodului Bisericii Ortodoxe din America.

Această lipsă de unitate administrativă, care constituie o anomalie față de Canoanele Bisericii, trebuie să înceteze. Intr'o bună zi fiecare ierarh ortodox din America de Nord va fi mădular al unui singur Sfânt Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe din America. Bisericile -Mame înseși și "jurisdicțiile" lor din America de Nord, călăuzite de Duhul Sfânt, lucrează

Cont. la pag. 18

DESPRE ANUMITE

Cont. de la pag. 17

pentru atingerea acestei ținte, a unității administrative, care se va exprima în existența unui Sinod unic al ierarhilor în America de Nord.

Ceea ce frământă ierarhii, preoții și mirenii din toate jurisdicțiile Americii de Nord este conștiința acută a acestei "unități neîmplinite" a Bisericii și de aceea, prin eforturile lor unite, se străduiesc să lucreze neostenit pentru realizarea recunoașterii universale a unei Biserici Autocefale în America de Nord.

SCOBA poate fi văzută ca un asemenea efort la nivelul ierarhilor. În multe orașe există "Asociații ale Preoților" care reprezintă tot atâtea eforturi similare la nivelul lor local. Deasemenea există "Societăți laice" ale căror membri fac parte din diferite jurisdicții și care împreună lucrează pentru ca să mărturisească împreună o singură Sfântă, Sobornicească și Apostolică Credință.

"COMISIA DE DIALOG"

In duhul celor spuse, reprezentanți ai Episcopiei noastre și ai Arhidiocezei, formând o "Comisie de Dialog", au lucrat împreună într'un trecut nu îndepărtat, și au prezentat ierarhilor respectivi concluzia că nu există nici o rațiune care i-ar împiedica pe preoții și credincioșii noștri să nu se roage împreună și să nu slujească împreună ca niște frați în fața Sfântului Altar. Congresele ambelor Dioceze au fost de acord cu concluzia Comisiei. Impreună cu Arhiepiscopul Victorin am îmbrățișat propunerea aceasta și astfel, unitatea sacramentală între cele două diocese a fost restaurată.

Anumiți membri ai acestei Comisii au voit să meargă mai departe și să se înceapă considerarea modurilor de unificare administrativă a celor două dioceze. Congresul Arhiepiscopiei împuternicese pe membrii lor în Comisie să poarte discuțiile în această direcție. Congresul nostru, însă, nu discutase la rândul său această problemă. Pentru aceasta, am socotit că este nevoie de un timp mai îndelungat, pentru a determina cum simt și gândesc preoții și mirenii Episcopiei noastre, înainte de a începe un asemenea dialog pentru unitate.

Ca punct de informare, reamintim că jurisdicțiile Antiohiene, Sârbe și Ucrainiene din America de Nord, aflate în aceeași situație ca jurisdicțiile române, au suferit și ele în sânul lor durerea lipsei de unitate, dar în timp, cu înțelegere și bună voință, fiecare grup a discutat problemele care îi dezbina, și cu harul Domnului, le-au rezolvat și astfel fiecare

grup și-a împlinit unitatea administrativă într'd singură jurisdicție etnică.

PROBLEMA PREZENTĂ

Unii preoți ai Episcopiei noastre, cunoscând evenimentele istorice desfășurate în sânul altor jurisdicții, au cumpănit realitatea lipsei de unitate din propria lor comunitate etnică și s'au hotărât să discute între ei, nădăjduind că vor afla o unitate de gândire asupra modului în care să adreseze problema lipsei de unitate administrativă în comunitatea românească.

In căutarea unirii, dorința lor a fost întemeiată îr parte pe reflecțiile asupra dorinței istorice a clerului și a credincioșilor mireni încă de la începuturile existenței lor în America de Nord, de a crea și de a menține o unitate în Comunitatea Românească. Es și-au văzut activitatea lor ca o continuare a acester dorințe a vremurilor de atunci.

A. "Scrisoarea-cerere" din 18 Ianuarie

La 24 Ianuarie 1996, Cancelaria/Oficium Episcopiei a primit o scrisoare din partea celor care și-au propus să vorbească în numele "clerului și mirenilor", ridicând problema posibilității de "Aforma Mitropolia Ortodoxă Română în Statele Unite și Canada".

Scopul scrisorii a fost să informeze Oficiul Episcopului asupra intenției de a supune Consiliului Episcopesc o petiție: "cererea noastră (este) adresată Consiliului Episcopesc călăuzit de Dumnezeu, și Prea Sfinției Voastre, de a forma o comisie de dialog între Episcopia noastră și Arhiepiscopia Misionară, pentru a iniția discuția detaliilor în vederea împlinirii acestui eveniment istoric în viața românilor ortodocși de aici și pentru viitorul Bisericii Ortodoxe în USA".

"Evenimentul istoric" menționat este formarea unei "Mitropolii Ortodoxe Române (pentru) Statele Unite și Canada... până când se va forma Patriarhatur American".

Cancelaria/Oficiul nostru a încercat să înțeleagă de ce această propunere de a forma o Mitropolie Română a fost inițiată acum și pentru ce a fost exprimată cu atâta duh al "urgenței".

O motivare s'ar putea găsi în faptul că o inițiativi anterioară a fost făcută în lucrările Consiliului Episcopesc de a se propune Sfântului Sinod ar Bisericii Ortodoxe din America, ridicarea Episcopie noastre la rangul de arhidioceză și ierarhul ei li rangul de arhiepiscop. În ședința din 11 Noembrii 1995, a fost înființat un comitet pentru a studi propunerea. Raportul includea faptul că mărimea ș

umărul credincioșilor și al parohiilor Episcopiei r justifica această schimbare a rangului.

De asemenea ar fi putut fi socotit că această propunere" a Consiliului către Sfântul Sinod al DCA n'ar fi fost suficientă și n'ar fi atins scopul iziunii unității administrative a jurisdicțiilor române.

Am considerat de asemenea faptul că dizolvând articiparea noastră la "Comisia de dialog", unii reoți și mireni ar fi interpretat acest act ca fiind fârșitul oricăror discuții care ar fi putut duce la initatea administrativă. (vezi: SOLIA 1295, Episopate Council Meets).

B. "Răspunsul Episcopiei" din 24 Ianuarie

La 24 Ianuarie, am trimis un aspru răspuns adresat Celor Interesați", privitor la propunerea unei Mitropolii Ortodoxe Române în Statele Unite și Canada". Intenția ne-a fost să facem cunoscut că ubiectul era deja în considerația Consiliului Episcopesc și ca atare: "discuții asupra acestei teme ur fi fost incluse în lucrările Consiliului din 9 Martie, chiar dacă acest fax n'ar fi fost trimis".

Scrisoarea noastră a fost categorică afirmând că a asemenea problemă nu este limitată numai la Comunitatea Românească ci privește de fapt Ortodoxia Americană și chiar Ortodoxia în genere. Ne-am exprimat deosebita îngrijorare ca o asemenea 'cerere' neoficială "către Consiliul Episcopesc", ar putea fi distribuită parohiilor și adunărilor lor generale, creând astfel confuzie și interpretări greșite din care ar rezulta sciziuni în parohii și dioceză.

In termenii cei mai aspri, le-am impus să înceteze orice activitate în continuare: "...în mod specific și categoric am cerut să nu se mai producă nici un fel de scrisori, nici un fel de petiții, nici o discuție în adunările parohiale, ... gravitatea subiectului...fiind pasibilă de procedura sistemului judecătoresc al Bisericii".

"Această problemă este de competența Oficiului Episcopiei...a Consiliului Episcopesc din care fac parte cinci preoți și zece mireni...și...a Congresului Episcopiei".

C. "Scrisoarea sondaj-de-opinie", din 2 Februarie

Pare-se, totuși, că mai înainte ca scrisoarea noastră să ajungă la destinatari, un "Comitet Ad Hoc" începuse să-și coordoneze legături telefonice, creând: "Comitetul de Inițiativă pentru Formarea Mitropoliei Ortodoxe Române în Statele Unite și Canada", și circulând un "Sondaj-de-Opinie" în scris, purtând data de "Întâmpinarea Domnului

Nostru Iisus Hristos (2.2.96). Acest "Sondaj-de-Opinie" a fost distribuit în limba română și în limba engleză, cu ușoare modificări datorate expresiilor lingvistice și temperamentului.

D. "Răspunsul Episcopiei" din 27 Februarie

Episcopia a primit o copie al acestui sondaj-deopinii abia la 13 Februarie a.c., de la o altă sursă decât a autorilor. La **27 Februarie** a.c., ne-am exprimat nedumerirera în legătură cu această scrisoare, menționând "cu amărăciune" că autorii nu ne-au trimis și nouă o copie, protestând totodată că acest "sondaj" a fost distribuit ca și cum ar fi fost un document oficial al Episcopiei.

Am reamintit procedurile în crearea politicei treburilor externe (By-Laws, A.III, S.20,1), subliniind autorilor că numai organele responsabile ale Episcopiei pot determina timpul și necesitatea unei asemenea inițiative și dojenindu-i pentru actul de a distribui un document care apărea să fie în contradicție cu îndrumarea noastră de a nu mai distribui asemenea hârtii.

Noi nu am pus sub semnul întrebării dorirea unității. Ingrijorarea noastră era ca pacea Episcopiei să nu fie amenințată de declarații premature și neoficiale și nici de propunerea vreunei acțiuni fără deplina participare a clerului și a mirenilor.

Scrisoarea noastră afirma: "Cu toții dorim ca Biserica în America să fie administrativ autocefală și cu toții suntem de acord că nevoile spirituale ale comunităților etnice trebuie să fie împlinite. Noi nu vom descuraja discuțiile care ar putea conduce la asemenea rezultate binecuvântate. Cu toate acestea,...noi avertizăm că pacea și demnitatea Episcopiei trebuie păzite și trebuie avută deosebită grijă ca orice discuție particulară asupra acestui subiect să nu fie interpretată ca o acțiune "oficială" luată fără participarea întregii Biserici".

O anumită persoană însă, și-a luat libertatea de a distribui scrisoarea presei românești și Oficiul nostru a fost informat de către Cancelaria Bisericii Ortodoxe din America că o copie a "Sondajului-de-Opinie" a ajuns până la Fericirea Sa, Mitropolitul Theodosius, Primatul Bisericii noastre.

E.- "Petiția" către Consiliul Episcopesc din 28 Februarie

La 1 Martie, Oficiul Episcopiei a primit o a doua scrisoare/fax cu data de 28 Februarie, ca o petiție formală către Consiliul Episcopesc de a include în agenda întrunirii din 9 Martie "Formarea

Cont. la pag. 20

DESPRE ANUMITE

Cont. de la pag. 19

Mitropoliei Ortodoxe Române in Statele Unite si Canada".

Scrisoarea se termina cu propunerea : "Comitetul de Inițiativă ar dori să trimită 'Comitetul Ad Hoc' la Consiliul Episcopesc și la Adunarea Protopopilor pentru a prezenta (clarificări)".

O a doua scrisoare, "Notă Explicativă", a fost trimisă împreună cu "Scrisoarea petiție", afirmând: "Voim a fi foarte clar în mintea oricui că intenția noastră este sinceră și serioasă și nu voim să divizăm unitatea Episcopiei noastre, nici să lucrăm împotriva Episcopului nostru".

"...Noi voim să tămăduim rănile trecutului, să refacem unitatea cu frații noștrii...pentru o viitoare Patriarhie Americană...să întărim misiunea noastră...și să vorbim cu un singur glas pentru nevoile si valorile noastre".

"Noi credem cu tărie în idea că trebuie să facem o bună rânduială în casa Ortodoxiei noastre românești, pentru a putea fi în stare să vorbim și să acționăm pentru Patriarhia Americană, precum vedem că mulți dintre frații noștri ortodocși din USA și Canada o fac în ultima vreme. De ce să fim noi ultimii?".

F. Intrunirea Protopopilor din 8 Martie

La fiecare doi ani, convocăm o întrunire specială a tuturor Protopopilor. Această întrunire, care a fost convocată anul acesta, a precedat ședința Consiliului Episcopesc doar cu o zi. Am invitat de aceea Protopopii și la lucrările Consiliului Episcopesc în ziua următoare. Printre alte probleme ale agendei era și subiectul "Mitropoliei Române".

Cu toate că Oficiul Episcopiei nu a reacționat la propunerea "Comitetului Ad Hoc" de a participa la ședințele Protopopilor și a Consiliului Episcopesc, doi dintre membri au venit la Sediul Diocezei, la Vatra,în timpul întrunirii Protopopilor. După o consultare a acestora, am invitat reprezentanții "Comitetului Ad Hoc" să-și prezinte cererea. Cei prezenți le-au mulțumit; nu a avut loc nici o altă discuție; ei au părăsit sala și ședința Protopopilor a continuat.

G. Şedinţa Consiliului Episcopesc din 9 Martie

Printre alte subiecte ale adunării Consiliului Episcopesc din 9 Martie, a fost și acela al propusei "Mitropolii". Copii ale "Scrisorii cerere" au fost

distribuite membrilor, după care au urmat discuțiile

S'a luat hotărîrea de "a se amâna fără dată precisă' studiul recomandării comitetului de a cere Sfântulu Sinod recunoașterea Episcopiei ca o arhidioceză și ridicarea ierarhului ei la rangul de arhiepiscopi Consiliul a format deasemenea un comitet care să studieze problema unității dintre cele două jurisdicții românești din America de Nord, pentru a fi discutată la Congresul Episcopiei.

In ziua de Luni ce a urmat, am avut ca oaspete personal pe Fericirea Sa, Mitropolitul Theodosius Am discutat împreună premizele "Scrisorii de inițiativă", prezenta situație a lipsei de unitate și pluralitatea jurisdicțională în America de Nord precum și situația Ortodoxiei în întreaga lume.

H. Lucrările Sfântului Sinod din 18-21 Martie

In săptămâna următoare, între 18 și 21 Martie am fost prezenți la lucrările de primăvară al Sfântului Sinod ale Episcopilor Bisericii Ortodox din America. Subiectul "Scrisorii de inițiativă" fost de asemenea pe ordinea de zi.

Din procesul verbal al lucrărilor Sfântului Sinod cităm următoarele: "Scrisoarea, adresată unui anumin număr de preoți ai Episcopiei Române (și semnată de 13 preoți), exprimă dorința ca Episcopia să să unească cu Arhidioceza Română și să dobândească statutul de autonomie sau autocefalie în America ascopul lor principal, formulând cererea, este să unească cele două Diocese Române și nu să separe de Biserica Ortodoxă din America și nici să se pună sub omoforul Patriarhiei Române".

"Episcopul NATHANIEL a declarat de asemene că preoții semnatari ai cererii erau preocupați d faptul că Comunitatea Ortodoxă Română nu est recunoscută cum se cuvine de către Permanent Consfătuire a Episcopilor Ortodocși din Americ... că numeroase grupuri de albanezi, bulgari români aflați în Biserica Ortodoxă din Americ sunt reprezentați de o singură persoană".

CâTEVA CONCLUZII:

- 1.-"Comitetul de Inițiativă" nu a propus unificare celor doua Episcopii Române în America c. Nord sub jurisdicția Patriarhiei Române.
- "Comitetul de Inițiativă" a propus a se da urman continuării discuțiilor cu Arhidioceza Român în vederea unificării Comunității Române di Nordul Americii.
- 3.-Consiliul Episcopesc, care a considerat ace subject în sesiunile sale anterioare încă din 199 a întocmit un comitet care să pregătească u studiu, pentru a fi prezentat Congresul

Episcopiei, privitor la posibilitatea unității administrative a jurisdicțiilor Ortodoxe Române din America de Nord.

este favorabil discuțiilor care ar putea duce la unitatea tuturor ortodocșilor din America de Nord și care ar promova o prezență mai reprezentativă a jurisdicțiilor etnice în SCOBA sau oricare altă Adunare a Episcopilor reprezentând întreaga Biserică în America de Nord.

REFLECȚIILE NOASTRE ASUPRA UNITĂȚII BISERICII ÎN AMERICA DE NORD

A. Caracterul Etnic al Bisericii Americane

Dorința unei unități Ortodoxe și înființarea unei atriarhii Americane este una din principalele reocupări ale Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America. Fiind parte a Bisericii Ortodoxe din America din 1970, împreună cu credincioșii albanezi, ulgari și mexicani, avem simțul împlinirii nevoilor pirituale ale confraților noștri români, fiind în același imp parte intregrantă din mărturia unei unificate Ortodoxii în America de Nord.

Întrevedem Biserica în America de Nord împlinind responsabilitate specifică în slujirea nevoilor pirituale ale credincioșilor etnici aflați aici și a elor ce vor mai veni.

Percepția noastră e că existența continuă a urisdicțiilor etnice, precum și structurile lor particulare existente, sunt fundamental necesare pentru stabilitatea Bisericii în momentul de față al storiei Bisericii în America de Nord.

Noi recunoaștem bogata varietate a tradițiilor ortodoxe în America de Nord și mulțumim Bisericilor Mame pentru acest dar diversificat pe care emigranții 'au adus pe țărmurile noastre și care au devenit o parte integrantă a patrimoniului și mărturiei noastre comune ortodoxe.

B. Caracterul American al Bisericii

Este clar că Americanii născuți aici, de origine etnică, sunt partea unei plămădeli noi care modelează Biserica de la o prezență strict emigrantă la o mărturisire americană. Talentele și darurile lor specifice și speciale pentru Biserică trebuie folosite a maximum. Din rândul lor, de fapt, ar trebui să vină viitorii preoți.

Credința în America de Nord a fost nespus de pinecuvântată prin numeroșii convertiți la credință, ncepând cu băștinașii din Alaska care continuă să

folosească propria lor limbă în sfintele slujbe. Şi alți convertiți "au văzut lumina adevărată" și au îmbogățit Biserica cu zelul și ardoarea de a răspândi Evanghelia mântuirii.

Astfel, Biserica nu este numai "etnică", nici exclusiv "americană", ci cu adevărat "sobornicească" în alcătuirea ei din toate neamurile în America de Nord.

C. Un Singur Sinod al Ierarhilor în America

Socotim că un sinod unificat al tuturor Ierarhilor Ortodocși în America de Nord, este absolut necesar și suntem convinși că prin recunoașterea statutului de autocefalie al Bisericii în America de Nord și prin înființarea unei Patriarhii Americane, toate îngrijorările jurisdicționale prezente se vor rezolva repede și mulțumitor, întru tainica lucrare a Sfântului Duh prin Sfântul Sinod.

D. Grija spirituală pentru Comunitățile Etnice

Prețuind înțelegerea Bisericilor-Mame a misiunii de "a merge și propovădui la toate neamurile" ca însemnând că ori unde s'ar afla cei de-un neam cu ele, Biserica are totdeauna grijă de ei, noi promitem că toate aceste îngrijorări spirituale ale fiecărei Biserici Mame pentru copiii ei "etnici" în America de Nord, vor fi satisfăcute de un Sinod unificat al Episcopilor, călăuzind Biserica în America de Nord.

Ca atare, propunem ca fiecare Biserică Patriarhală să-și dea binecuvântarea recunoscând statutul "de pre-autocefalie" pentru propria ei comunitate etnică din America de Nord. După ce fiecare comunitate a fost binecuvântată astfel, Patriarhia Ecumenică, în numele Bisericilor-Surori, să anunțe autocefalia unificată a Bisericii în America de Nord, care să reflecte acordul unanim al întregei Biserici.

Socotim că Patriarhia Ecumenică de la Constantinopol ar avea numai de câștigat prin recunoașterea unei Patriarhii Americane care va avea un puternic glas unit în societatea americană.

Noi ne oferim cu smerenie talentul și darurile concentrate în Biserica Americană pentru slujirea Ortodoxiei în lume și a Bisericilor ei Surori.

+NATHANIEL, Episcop Episcopia Ortodoxă Română din America

Sărbătoarea Sărbătorilor, Paști 1996 Vatra Românească Grass Lake, Michigan, USA

Cuvânt al Celui dintre Sfinți, Părintele nostru Dimitrie, mitropolitul Rostovului, la Înălțarea Domnului, Dumnezeului și Mântuitorului nostru Iisus Hristos

"Deci Domnul, după ce a grăit cu ei,s'a înălțat la cer și a șezut de-a dreapta lui Dumnezeu" (Marcu 16, 19).

Acest praznic de acum, al Înălțării Domnului, nu știu, iubiții mei ascultători, praznic de bucurie săl numesc sau de plângere. L'aș numi praznic de bucurie, dar văd pe Sfinții Apostoli plângând și întristându-se, lucru pe care și Biserica îl arată, că la stihirile de la Vecernie, cântă așa: "Doamne, Apostolii, dacă te-au văzut pe Tine pe nori înălțândute, Dătătorule de Viață, Hristoase, de întristare umplându-se, cu tânguire de lacrimi plângând,ziceau:Stăpâne, să nu ne lași orfani, pe noi, robii Tăi, pe care, din milostivire,ne-ai iubit".

L'as numi praznic de plăngere, dar văd pe acești Sfinți Apostoli bucurându-se, după cum troparul de astăzi ne arată, zicând: "Înălțatu-Te-ai întru slavă, Hristoase Dumnezeul nostru, bucurie făcând ucenicilor, cu făgăduința Sfântului Duh". Să-l numesc dar praznic de bucurie. Însă văd pe Preacurata, pe Binecuvântata Fecioară de Dumnezeu Născătoarea, mai mult decât toți, izvorând lacrimi fierbinți din ochi, pentru despărțirea iubitului ei Fiu și zicând: "Nu mă lăsa pe mine, Fiul meu". Să-l numesc atunci praznic de plângere! Dar văd iarăși, pe aceeași Preabinecuvântată Fecioară, de Dumnezeu Născătoare, pentru acest Fiu și Dumnezeu al ei, prea mult bucurându-se de a Lui dumnezeiască proslăvire, precum și la slava Vecerniei arată, cântând: "Pe ucenicii Tăi și pe Născătoarea de Dumnezeu, ceea ce Te-a născut pe Tine, i-ai umplut de bucurie nemărginită la înălțarea Ta".

Deci,să-1 numesc,oare,praznic de bucurie? Dar ce fel de bucurie este pentru copii, când îi lasă tatăl lor? Ce fel de mângâiere este,pentru oi, dacă pleacă păstorul de la ele? Ce fel de veselie, pentru Biserica Mireasă, când se desparte de ea Mirele Hristos,deși nu de tot,că zice: "Eu sunt cu voi, în toate zilele, până la sfârșitul veacului", însă nevăzut,că ochii cei trupești nu-L vor mai vedea, fără numai ochii cei sufletești. Să-l numesc, praznic de plângere? Dar văd pe Domnul meu luminat, bucuros și cu veselie, mergând către Tatăl și toate puterile cerești, dănțuind negrăit. Încă și Biserica o văd chemând pe toți locuitorii pământului spre veselie și grăind: "Toate neamurile bateți cu mâinile, că S'a suit Hristos, unde era mai înainte".

Bucurie cu adevărat, desăvârșită, celor de Sus ș deplină mângăiere, iar nouă, celor de jos, bucurie, cu plângere și veselie, cu lacrimi și mângăiere, cu întristare. Voi, cei doi îngeri, mângâietorii noștri cei ce în haine albe ați stat la muntele Eleonulu înaintea Apostolilor, mângâiați pe cei ce se întristează, bucurați pe cei ce plâng, ziceți ceva de bucurie, grăind: "Bărbați galileeni, ce stați, privinc la cer? Acest Iisus, Care S'a înalțat la cer, așa v veni, precum L'ați văzut mergând la cer". N închinăm vouă pentru vestea aceasta de bucurie dar ne și întristăm, că ne spuneți nouă de a dou înfricosătoare venire a lui Hristos, că va veni s judece și să osândească pe păcătoși. Să căutăm, dai noi înșine, în Sfintele Scripturi, iubiții mei ascultător pricinile de bucurie ale Tainei de astăzi. Pentr care pricină s'a înălțat de la noi, Domnul nostru,l cer?

S'a înălțat Domnul nostru de la noi la cer, nu c să ne întristeze pe noi, cu a Sa ducere,ci, ca să n întocmească nouă cele de folos. Că toată viața Lu și toate faptele Lui, spre al nostru folos și a noastn mântuire, au fost rânduite.

Deci, și înălțarea Lui, pentru binele nostru a fos Precum, iubindu-ne pe noi, S'a pogorât la noi di cer și viețuind cu oamenii, Şi-a pus sufletul Său p Cruce, pentru că așa a iubit Dumnezeu lumea, într același chip, iubindu-ne pe noi, S'a înălțat la ce bine făcându-ne nouă. Că a zis către ucenicii Să "Mai de folos este vouă, ca eu să mă duc, că, de n Mă voi duce Eu, Mângâietorul nu va veni căti voi". Ca și cum ar zice: "Luați aminte, voi ucenic Mei, că vouă, fiecăruia, vă este rânduit, ca, p deosebite căi, să ieșiți la propovăduirea Cuvântul lui Dumnezeu, în toată lumea. Iar în lume necazu veți avea, că voi vă veți tângui și veți plânge și ve fi întristați, iar lumea se va bucura. Întru ace necazuri, întru acele plângeri și tânguiri, se cuvii ca, pe voi să vă mângâie cineva, să vă întăreasc să va sprijine. Pentru aceea, mă duc către Tatăl voi trimite vouă pe Duhul Sfânt, Mângâietoru Care de la Tatăl purcede, ca să vă mângâie în toa necazurile și întristările voastre. Pentru aceast mai de folos este ca Eu să mă duc.

Că te vor duce pe tine, Petre, unde tu nu vrei. vor pune în temniță și te vor da celor patru osta să te păzească. Încă și în Roma, lemn de cruce ți

regătit. Și tu Iacob, vei vedea, cel dintâi, asupra apului tău sabie, pentru numele Meu. Iar pe tine, oan,în părți depărtate, în insula Patmos,în izgonire e vor trimite. Pe tine Andrei, în Ahaia, te așteaptă rucea.Pe tine, Filip, în Ierapoli, iar pe tine, artolomeu, în Armenia, ca să fiți răstigniți și jupuiți e piele. Pe Matei îl așteaptă Etiopia, cu chinuri și e ceilalți, alte părți. Și așa fiecăruia, i s'a pregătit aharul, spre pătimirea lui. Deci, întru toate aceste ătimiri și amărăciuni, vi se cuvine vouă, acum, arecare mângâiere, îndulcire și sprijin. Deci, Mă oi duce către Tatăl Meu și voi trimite vouă pe fântul Duh, Mângâietorul, Care, stăruind în inima oastră, neînfricați vă va face și, cu bucurie, la toate hinurile și morțile, veți îndrăzni. Pentru aceasta, nai de folos este vouă, ca Eu să Mă duc. Si, după oi, mulți asemenea ca și voi, vor răbda multe eluri de pătimiri și morți pentru numele Meu: cu pietre vor fi uciși, de sabie omorâți, în foc arși, iarelor spre mâncare daţi, în bucăţi tăiaţi, iar alţii,şi ără chinuri, de bună voie, se vor afla mucenici, pentru Iragostea Mea, despărțindu-se de lume și toate lulcețile ei, lepădându-se de sine și omorându-și rupul lor, împreună cu patimile și cu poftele. Că ınii vor merge în pustie, alții se vor închide prin nânăstiri, alții se vor zăvori, sau alte nevoințe vor ace. Toți aceștia au trebuință de dumnezeiescul ijutor și de mângâiere. Deci, Mă voi duce la Tatăl i le voi trimite lor Mângâietor, că, altfel, El nu va veni. Pentru aceasta, mai de folos este, ca Eu să mă luc. Că, mulți din cei ce vor crede întru Mine, și oind a vietui cu cinste, vor fi prigoniți, mulți din cei necunoscuți de oameni vor pătimi, mulți drepți vor fi năpăstuiți și supărați.

O, cât de binecuvântată este pricina Înalțării Domnului de la noi, pricină făcătoare de bucurie, care, cu bună nădejde, pe noi ne încredințează, adeverind venirea Mângâietorului. Mergi, dar Doamne, mergi și ne trimite nouă, pe Mângâietorul.

S'a înalțat Domnul nostru de la noi la cer, ca să privească din înălțime la noi, precum un părinte la fiii săi, precum păstorul asupra oilor, precum vulturul asupra puilor, precum voievodul asupra oastei sale, ca pe toți să- i vadă și trebuințele tuturor să le cunoască și ajutor să-i dea fiecăruia, precum un împărat, când adună oaste multă spre război, voind a-și vedea toate cetele sale, se suie la un loc înalt, la munte sau pe o zidire, și caută din înălțime și o rânduiește pe ea. Şi de vede că biruiește, se bucură pentru ea, iar de vede că este învinsă, degrabă îi trimite ei ajutor. Așa și Domnul nostru, Impăratul împăraților, adună Biserica Sa, cea care se luptă pe pământ, ca, de la înălțime, să privească la nevoința fiecăruia, pentru ca, celor ce bine se nevoiesc, să le

împletească cununi, iar, celor ce slăbesc, să le întindă grabnică mână de ajutor. Pe cei căzuți, să-i ridice și să-i facă mai puternici asupra potrivnicilor, iar pe cei ce ne prigonesc, să-i împiedice.

S'a înalțat Domnul nostru, de la noi la cer,ca,precum soarele din cer, cu lumina, tot așa și Hristos, pe noi toți, cu Darul Său, să ne lumineze.

Soarele din cer strălucește și asupra celor buni și asupra celor răi. Domnul S'a suit la cer, ca să caute, din înălțimea cerului, peste cei drepți și peste păcătoși, Cel ce pe cei drepți îi iubește și pe cei păcătoși îi miluiește. Soarele, cu razele sale din cer, topește gerul și ghiața, încălzește pământul și îl face roditor;Domnul nostru S'a suit la înălțimea cerului, ca de acolo, cu razele darului Său, să topească sloiul cel înghețat al sufletelor noastre și să încălzească inimile noastre și să le facă pe ele ca un pământ aducător de roadă, ca să creștem în noi roade duhovnicești, pentru ca să nu ne aflăm înaintea Lui, fără de roade.

S'a înălțat Domnul nostru, de la noi la cer, ca să ne facă nouă cale spre cer și să ne fie nouă înaintemergător în părțile cele de sus. Nu ne era nouă liberă calea spre cer, până la dumnezeiasca Lui înălțare. Că nimeni nu s'a suit la cer, fără numai Cel ce S'a pogorât din cer. Precum vorbeste Apostolul: "Cel ce S'a pogorât, Acela este Cel Care S'a și suit, mai presus decât toate cerurile". Mai înainte, nu se putea sui cineva la cer, chiar drept și sfânt de ar fi fost. Plăcut era lui Dumnezeu, Noe, drepți erau Avraam, Isaac și Iacob, despre care se zice că erau "drepți înaintea lui Dumnezeu". Că așa glăsuiește împăratul Manase, către Dumnezeu: "N'ai pus pocăință drepților Tăi, lui Avraam, lui Isaac și lui Iacob, celor ce n'au greșit înaintea Ta.". Fără Cont. la pag. 24

ANUNŢ US INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURS

Ne-au informat că începând cu data de 17 Mai 1996 se poate zbura direct, fără oprire de la Chicago la Timișoara.

Pentru informații telefonați la:

(312) 404-0990

(219) 255-7272

Chicago, IL

Mishawaka, IN

(313) 427-4400 Garden City, MI

CUVÂNT AL CELUI

Cont. de la pag. 23

prihană era Iosif cel foarte frumos. Cu totul înțelept și Moise, cel ce a trecut pe Israil, ca pe uscat, prin mijocul Mării Roșii. Sfânt era Isus al lui Navi, cel ce a oprit soarele din alergarea sa.De asemenea și alți mulți bărbați sfinți, din Legea Veche, care au plăcut lui Dumnezeu, precum Daniil, bărbatul duhovniceștilor doriri, cel ce a închis gurile leilor, și cei trei tineri, care au stins cuptorul Babilonului, cu rugăciunea, precum și alți mari prooroci. Dar nici unul dintre acei de mai înainte de Hristos, nu putea să se suie la cer, și nici să audă cineva, dacă este, sau va fi, liberă oamenilor, calea la cer.Iar, când Domnul nostru S'a îmbrăcat în firea omenească și S'a suit la cer, îndată, la tot neamul omenesc, s'a făcut cale către cer.S'au dus pe urma lui Hristos, sufletele cele scoase din iad, ale sfinților strămoși, ale proorocilor. Printr'Însul, s'au suit apostolii, ierarhii, mucenicii, mărturisitorii, precum și acum se suie oamenii cei vrednici și drepți, care urmează pașilor lui Hristos. Tuturor, acum calea spre cer s'a făcut cunoscută, ceea ce mai înainte nici nu se putea auzi, numai să nu vă leneviți a vă sui pe ea și voi, o, oamenilor.

S'a înălțat Domnul nostru de la noi la cer, ca porțile cerești să ni se deschidă nouă, ca, neopriți, să intrăm în cer. &

Din Proloage

PREA SFINŢITUL EPISCOP NATHANIEL

invită toți credincioșii Episcopiei noastre să ia parte la tradiționala comemorare a zilei.

MEMORIAL DAY

Luni 27 May 1996 la Vatra Românească

PROGRAM

10:30 a.m. Sfânta Liturghie Arhierească12:00 Parastas pentru militarii decedati

Parastas în pavilionul cimitirului

și binecuvântarea normintelor

1:00 p.m. Pomană

TABĂRA DE VARĂ "VATRA"

Tabăra Pentru Juniori (11, 12 și 13 ani) 14 - 27 IULIE 1996

Tabăra Pentru Seniori (14, 15 și 16 ani) 4 - 17 AUGUST 1996

Formularele de înregistrare au fost trimise tuturor preoților parohi și le puteți obține de la parohia D-voastră.

Informații suplimentare puteți obține dela: Preoteasa Mary Ellen Rosco, 625 Centralia, Dearborn Hts., MI 48127. Tel: (313) 562-1521, Fax: (313) 274-9640. ❖

CONGRESUL ARFORA 1996

In zilele de 30 Mai — 2 Iunie 1996 va avea loc cel de al 48 lea Congres ARFORA, care se va ține la Biserica "Sf. Maria" din St. Paul, Minnesota. Preot Paroh: Mihai Cerghizan - (612) 489-5618. Organizatoare: Georgeta Poliac - (612) 486-0680

Programul Congresului este publicat în SOLIA - secția de limbă Engleză.

